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REVIEW NINTENDO SWITCH SPORTS

ISSUE 85 JUNE/JULY 2022



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THE JAPAN ISSUE

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LIVE A LIVE

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**YURUKILL:
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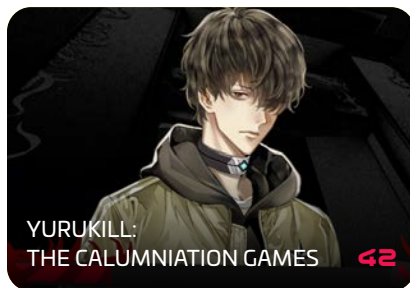


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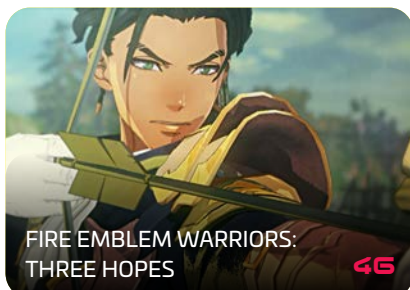
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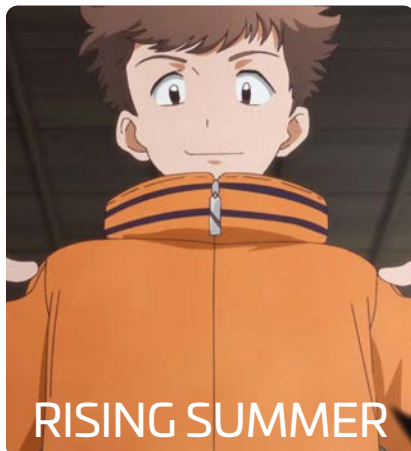


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welcome

FROM THE EDITORS



We don't do many theme issues here at *Walmart Gamecenter*, but as we thought about the games we wanted to include in this summer edition, one thing quickly became obvious: There are a ton of exciting games coming out of Japan these days.

Japan has been instrumental to the video game industry almost from the start, of course. Taito's *Space Invaders* landed in arcades in 1978 and quickly became gaming's first international hit. The Nintendo Entertainment System almost single-handedly revitalized the U.S. home console market after a massive crash in 1983. As games made the leap to 3D in the '90s, the titles that best showed us the future were Japanese: *Super Mario 64*, *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, *Final Fantasy VII*.

But around two decades ago, the industry shifted. Western-developed blockbusters like *Grand Theft Auto III* and *Halo* catapulted their genres to newfound popularity. Globally, tastes began to change. Japan still made games, yes, but it was no longer the powerhouse it once was. In 2002, the Japanese gaming industry had a global market share of around 50%. By 2010, that figure had plummeted to 10%. In certain circles, Japanese games came to be regarded as stale, recycling the same handful

of genre conventions and storylines ad nauseum.

Even back then, that wasn't really the whole truth, and it's certainly not accurate today. Whether working in familiar genres like JPRGs and visual novels or expanding into new styles of play, Japanese studios aren't short on innovation or imagination. Fresh ideas from Japan are making an impact in the West, too—the single most influential series of the last 10 years is undoubtedly FromSoftware's *Dark Souls*.

So to celebrate Japanese gaming, we're doing something a bit different this issue. Instead of one big cover story, we're bringing you five full previews—our most ever—focused on Japanese-developed games: *Xenoblade Chronicles 3*, *Digimon Survive*, *Live A Live*, *Yurukill: The Calumniation Games*, and *Fire Emblem Warriors: Three Hopes*. All of these titles launch in June or July, too, so you won't have to wait too long to get your hands on them.

Our Japanese theme doesn't end there, either. This issue, we also review yet another decidedly different game coming out of Japan, the motion-controlled *Nintendo Switch Sports*. And our Parting Shots interview highlights *Ghostwire: Tokyo*, a game that's not just from a Japanese studio but is actually set in Japan and brimming with references to Japanese folklore.

We definitely think all the games in this issue are worth a closer look, even if they might not be what you usually play. But if your tastes are decidedly skewed toward Western-made games, don't put the magazine down just yet. There's still plenty of news and some recommendations in our Five to Play you'll want to check out.

Tanoshinde kudasai, and be sure to keep reading *Walmart Gamecenter*, the magazine that keeps you at the center of all things gaming.

Josh Harmon and Mollie L Patterson

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EMBRACER TO ACQUIRE TOMB RAIDER STUDIO CRYSTAL DYNAMICS FOR A STEAL

Between Microsoft scooping up Activision Blizzard and Sony nabbing Bungie, major studio acquisitions have become fairly routine at this point. But the latest acquisition proves that these kinds of business decisions still have the capacity to surprise us.

Embracer Group—formerly known as THQ Nordic AB—recently announced that it entered an agreement to acquire three major studios from publisher Square Enix: Eidos, Square Enix Montréal, and, last but certainly not least, Crystal Dynamics. Not only does Embracer get these studios in the agreement, but it also acquires all of those studios' intellectual properties, including *Tomb Raider*, *Deus Ex*, *Legacy of Kain*, *Thief*, and most importantly, *Gex*.

Like we said earlier, major acquisitions like this are nothing new. So what makes this one so surprising? Square Enix is selling off all the above for just \$300 million.

For reference, Sony paid a cool \$3.6 billion for Bungie, and Microsoft acquired Bethesda for \$7.5 billion. \$300 million still

seems like a pittance—especially for a franchise like *Tomb Raider*, which has sold approximately 88 million games since its inception and has one of the most recognizable brand names in gaming. Its most recent “Survivor Trilogy” alone has sold over 38 million copies.

Embracer expects to close the deal sometime between July and September of

to Epic's suite of tools from its proprietary Foundation Engine.

Beyond that, we expect that we will also see new titles in the *Deus Ex*, *Legacy of Kain*, and *Thief* franchises, as Embracer called out all three in the announcement about the acquisition. One property not going to Embracer in the deal, however, is *Just Cause*, which Eidos originally published.

We know for a fact that Crystal Dynamics is already working on the next *Tomb Raider* game, as studio reps confirmed its development during Unreal Engine 5's launch stream.

this year. In the meantime, we can speculate what new projects might come out of these studios now that they're under new management.

We know for a fact that Crystal Dynamics is already working on the next *Tomb Raider* game, as studio reps announced its development during Unreal Engine 5's launch stream, also confirming that it was switching

As for Square Enix, the publisher announced that the sale “enables the launch of new businesses by moving forward with investments in fields including blockchain, AI, and the cloud.”

If you want to catch up on the *Tomb Raider* series, you can find all the latest games at Walmart.com or your local Walmart store.

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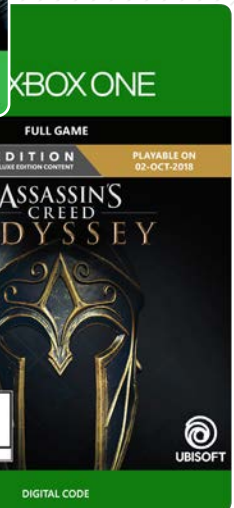
Keep your receipt and locate the download code printed at the bottom...



4. Redeem

Redeem the code printed on your receipt in your game console to download (when available) and then Play First without returning to the store!

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release
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JUN

24 AI: THE SOMNIUM FILES - NIRVANA INITIATIVE
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ONE, PS4, PC5 YURUKILL: THE CALUMNIATION GAME
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NACON / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PCHALO INFINITE SEASON 2 LAUNCH BRINGS
NEW MAPS, MODES

Halo Infinite's second content season, titled "Lone Wolves," launched in May, ushering in a major update that added new maps and new modes, including the game's first foray into the battle royale genre.

Developer 343 Industries added two new maps with the start of Season 2. The new Arena map is called Catalyst, and was designed primarily as a Capture the Flag map. The other map, Breaker, is the new Big Team Battle map and features a laser beam that cuts through the middle of the playfield.

Season 2's new modes add even more variety to what's already on offer in *Halo Infinite*. Most exciting might be Last



Spartan Standing, a mode that takes a few notes from the battle royale genre while shrinking down the scope to just 12 players. Other new modes include an updated King of the Hill and Land Grab.

While you can play *Halo Infinite's* multiplayer for free, you can buy its excellent single-player experience from Walmart.com or your local Walmart store.

UNCHARTED CREATOR GETS ANOTHER
CRACK AT STAR WARS

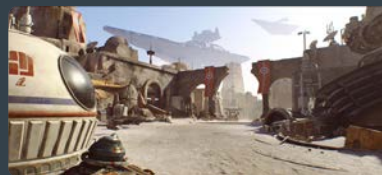
Amy Hennig, the writer and director behind the first three *Uncharted* games, is heading back to a galaxy far, far away. Her current studio, Skydance New Media, announced a partnership with Lucasfilm Games to create "a narrative-driven, action-adventure game featuring an original story in the *Star*

Wars galaxy," per the project's official announcement.

This isn't Hennig's first time working with *Star Wars*. In her previous position at EA's Visceral Games, Hennig spent years on a project, codenamed Ragtag, that would've been similar: an action-adventure game with an original story set in the famous sci-fi universe. Unfortunately, EA shuttered Visceral in 2017, and eventually canceled Project Ragtag.

This deal marks Skydance's second major partnership with Disney. Hennig is also working on a game starring a Marvel superhero—though we don't know which one just yet.

There's no word on when either game will be ready, nor on which platforms the studio is targeting. In the meantime, you can pick up the latest *Star Wars* games and Hennig's earlier work at your local Walmart store or on Walmart.com.



*Images from Project Ragtag



KINGDOM HEARTS WILL RETURN WITH A NEW SAGA

When *Kingdom Hearts III* launched in 2019, Square Enix touted it as the conclusion to an epic saga 12 games and 17 years in the making. But the series, which mashed up characters from *Final Fantasy* games and Disney movies with original heroes and villains to tell one of the most convoluted stories in the history of mankind, was so popular that a sequel seemed inevitable.

Well, the inevitable has arrived. Square Enix has now confirmed that *Kingdom Hearts IV* is in development, and it'll kick off an entirely new saga known as the

Despite telling a new chapter, the game does appear to follow on directly from the events of *Kingdom Hearts III*, with franchise hero Sora making a return.

"Lost Master Arc." Despite starting a new chapter, the game does appear to follow on directly from the events of *Kingdom Hearts III*, with franchise hero Sora making a return. Now, we can't get into specifics without some *big spoilers*, so be forewarned, and maybe skip the next paragraph if you're not already up to speed.

At the end of the last game, you may recall, Sora sacrificed himself to save his friend Kairi. But a post-launch expansion, *Kingdom Hearts III Re Mind*, confirmed he didn't actually die, but instead found himself transported to a sprawling, modern metropolis.



That city, known as Quadratum, will apparently play a major role in *Kingdom Hearts IV*. In the first teaser trailer, Sora awakens in a swanky apartment before being dragged into a fight against a giant Heartless monster in the streets of Quadratum. The new setting is noteworthy in that it looks more like real-world Tokyo than a fantasy land, with high-end graphics to match, and Sora has an updated, more realistic design too. But *Kingdom Hearts IV* isn't ditching cartoons entirely, as the trailer also confirmed that Sora's Disney companions Donald and Goofy will return, on a quest to find Sora.

Still, the most exciting thing about the new game might be a detail Square Enix has only hinted at. During a shot of a tranquil forest, there's a brief glimpse of a strange metallic object. Eagle-eyed fans think it might be the foot of an AT-ST walker from *Star Wars*. *Kingdom Hearts* creator Tetsuya Nomura has long dreamed of adding a *Star Wars*-themed world to the series. Could he finally be getting his wish?

We don't know yet when (or on what consoles) *Kingdom Hearts IV* will launch. In the meantime, you can get up to speed by finding *Kingdom Hearts III* on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.

UBISOFT CONFIRMS LEAKED MULTIPLAYER GAME IS REAL

After a series of leaks revealed a new "battle arena" game in development at Ubisoft, the publisher has stepped forward to confirm the title's existence.

Codenamed Project Q, it's an online PvP contest with a focus on "letting players truly own the experience," according to the announcement. Ubisoft also released a single piece of stylish concept art and shared a few details: The game is still early in development, it won't be a battle royale, and it won't feature NFTs, the controversial cryptocurrency-powered collectibles that the publisher has dabbled with in other games.



Thanks to the leaked footage, however, we may know a bit more. Gameplay posted online showed a third-person camera, objective-based matches, and a brightly colored map inspired by Japan. Players could equip three abilities from a large selection that included ranged and melee weapons with a cartoonish bent—a fireworks launcher that worked a bit like a shotgun, for instance.

Until we learn more, you can sign up for upcoming Project Q playtests on the official website, and shop Ubisoft's other multiplayer games on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.

s to play



1

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SNIPER ELITE 5

PUBLISHER REBELLION / DEVELOPER REBELLION / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 05.26.22

"*Sniper Elite* is about the secret weapons of war. You operate behind enemy lines, not on the front line. This is what separates our game from a lot of others. For *Sniper Elite 5*, we wanted to make a game set in France. [It's] a key location that we have yet to visit in the series, and we wanted every level to scream France. We put real focus onto expanding the espionage side of the game, and the main missions are the ones that really drive the story, while the side objectives add more details and a deeper lore to the narrative and the characters, ensuring that there is a real purpose to each of those objectives. Your loadout, weapon customization, playstyle, what side missions you complete are all completely your choice. We just give you a start point and end point, and the rest is up to you."

JORDAN WOODWARD, HEAD OF DESIGN, REBELLION

"We put real focus onto expanding the espionage side of the game, and the main missions are the ones that really drive the story."

MARIO STRIKERS: BATTLE LEAGUE

PUBLISHER NINTENDO / DEVELOPER NINTENDO, NEXT LEVEL GAMES / PLATFORMS SWITCH / RELEASE DATE 06.10.2022

"In *Mario Strikers: Battle League*, characters from the Mushroom Kingdom—including Mario, Peach, Donkey Kong, and Toad—play Strike, a 5-on-5 sport that's like soccer, except the action is over-the-top, with players doing whatever it takes to win. Mayhem is encouraged, and there are no penalties in the game, so players can use special items and shots, as well as use such tactics as tackling opposing players to take them down. Up to eight players (four players on each team) can play locally on one Switch. But the new online Strikers Club mode—which allows 20 friends to join a club and compete to become the world's top club—really adds a new layer of competition. The gear available to customize your characters is incredible, too. You can change your character's appearance by donning flashy gear, and it can be equipped to boost their stats, which will vary between characters."

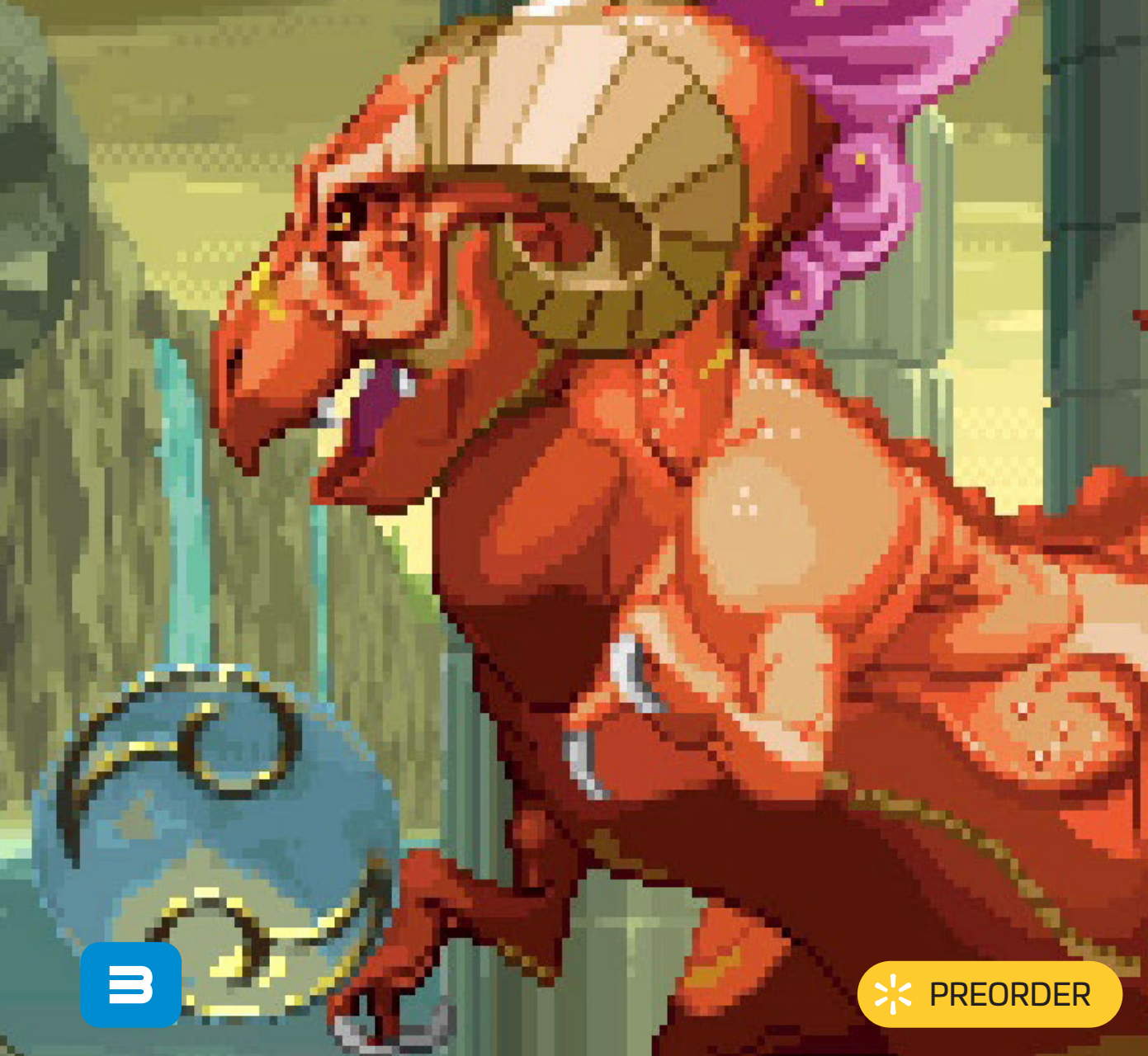
RUTH TINCHER, PRODUCT EXPERIENCE SPECIALIST, NINTENDO TREEHOUSE

"Mayhem is encouraged, and there are no penalties in the game, so players can use special items and shots."









 **PREORDER**

CAPCOM FIGHTING COLLECTION

PUBLISHER CAPCOM / DEVELOPER CAPCOM / PLATFORMS SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 06.24.2022

In honor of the 35th anniversary of *Street Fighter*, the good people at Capcom have assembled a collection of 10 classic games from the company's extensive catalog of 2D fighters. And while it may seem a little odd that the first *Street Fighter*—the game actually having an anniversary—isn't one of them, you won't miss it. There are plenty of later (and greater) titles with iconic *Street Fighter* characters: *Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo*, *Hyper Street Fighter II*, and *Super Gem Fighter Mini Mix*. Or, if you prefer *Darkstalkers*, you can enjoy all five of those games, including the two Japanese-only releases *Vampire Hunter 2: Darkstalkers' Revenge* and *Vampire Savior 2: The Lord of Vampire*. The collection even includes the cult classic *Red Earth*, which has never been available outside of arcades before. Capcom also added online modes for every game, mid-game save options, and a museum with art, design documents, and the games' original soundtracks.

The collection even includes the cult classic *Red Earth*, which has never been available outside of arcades before.

s to play



AI: THE SOMNIUM FILES - NIRVANA INITIATIVE

PUBLISHER SPIKE CHUNSOFT / DEVELOPER SPIKE CHUNSOFT / PLATFORMS SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 06.24.2022

"AI: The Somnium Files - nirvanA Initiative, like the previous AI, is a text adventure—or visual novel—with interactive segments, such as 'quicktime' events and third-person exploring, similar to the *Danganronpa* and *Zero Escape* games. A detective adventure, it takes place in two points in time: one part a few weeks after the events of the previous game, and another part six years later. This gameplay is expanded and enhanced from the original in almost every way. For example, a lot of players felt that the Somnia were too difficult or 'random.' In this game, there is a 'Key' mechanic; as you play through the Somnium, you get Keys which act as clues for the subject's psyche or behavior. So if you get a Key that says this subject likes the color red, the next time you come to a choice, Blue or Red, you'll know the correct answer. It really helps the flow."

ALEX FLAGG, LOCALIZATION PRODUCER, SPIKE CHUNSOFT, INC.

"A detective adventure, it takes place in two points in time: one part a few weeks after the events of the previous game, and another part six years later."



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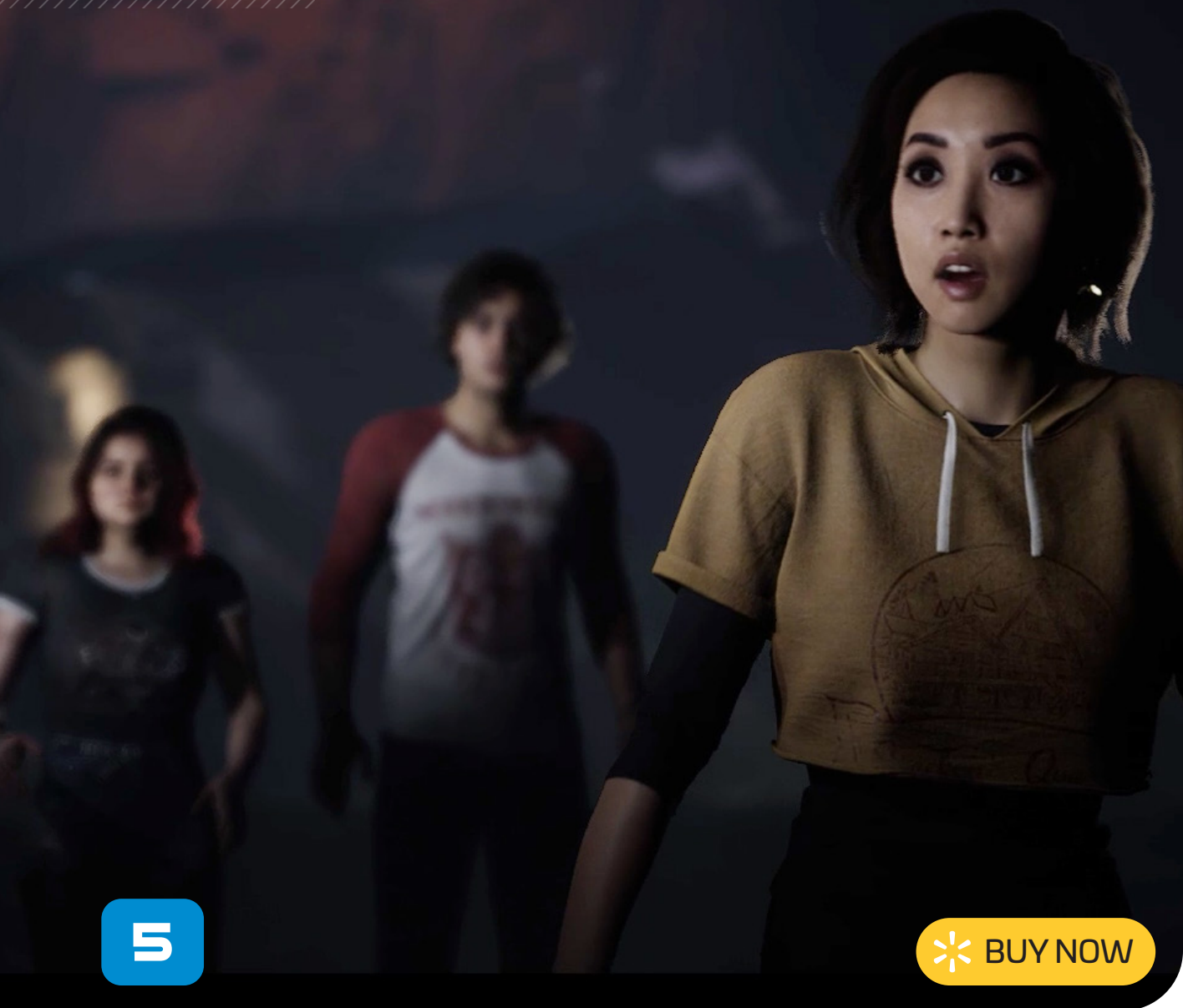
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5



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THE QUARRY

PUBLISHER 2K GAMES / DEVELOPER SUPERMASSIVE GAMES / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 06.10.2022

"*The Quarry* is a new game from the team that created *Until Dawn*. When the teenage counselors at Hackett's Quarry summer camp find themselves stuck for one more night, they decide to throw a huge party and, in classic horror movie fashion, things quickly take a turn for the worse. If you've played *Until Dawn* or *The Dark Pictures Anthology*, you'll feel right at home with this interactive horror game, where the story is immeasurably tied to the gameplay. Each of the eight acts focuses on different camp counselors that you control, with every decision shaping your unique story from a tangled web of possibilities. We also have a couch co-op experience where up to eight people are assigned camp counselors, passing the controller and taking turns; a multiplayer mode in which one person controls the game and up to seven people vote on decisions; and Movie Mode, where you select from a set of predetermined outcomes."

WILL BYLES, DIRECTOR, SUPERMASSIVE GAMES

"Each of the eight acts focuses on different camp counselors that you control, with every decision shaping your unique story from a tangled web of possibilities."

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SNIPER ELITE 5



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PS5



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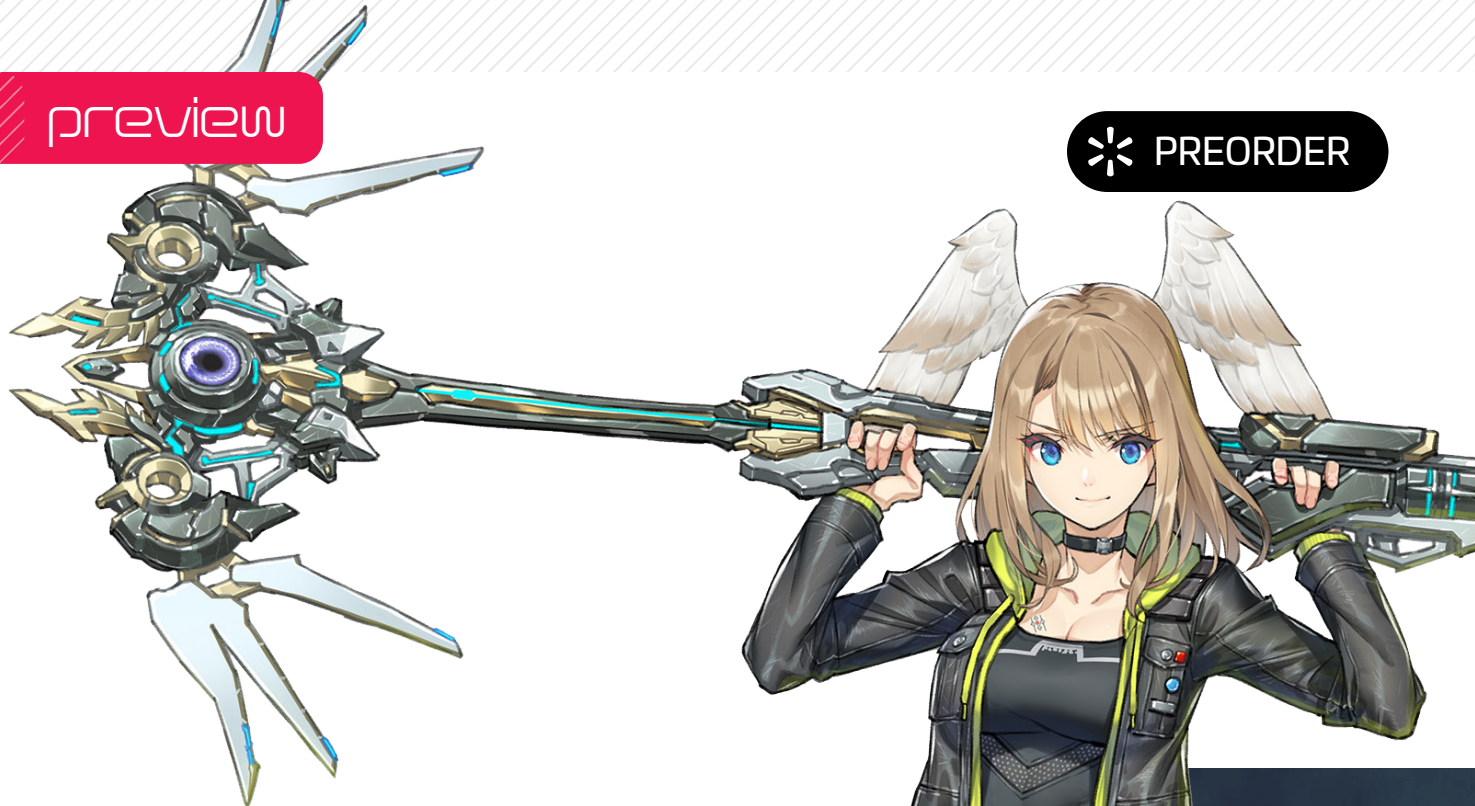
SERIES X|S

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preview

✱ PREORDER



XENOBLADE CHRONICLES 3

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

BY MICHAEL GOROFF

Xenoblade Chronicles is a JRPG series known for its epic scale and twisting, turning storylines, and the third mainline entry in the series promises to evolve it in interesting ways.

Taking place in the world of Aionios, *Xenoblade Chronicles 3*'s story unfolds in the shadow of a war between the nations of Keves and

Agnus. The mechanically powered Keves and the magically gifted Agnus are locked in conflict, but so far it's unclear exactly how this war started or why it continues.

In the midst of this strife, a Keves soldier, Noah, and an Agnus soldier, Mio, have an encounter that will shape Aionios' destiny. The two are both "off-seers" for their respective

Taking place in the world of Aionios, *Xenoblade Chronicles 3*'s story unfolds in the shadow of a war between the nations of Keves and Agnus.

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
NINTENDO
DEVELOPER
MONOLITH SOFT
PLATFORMS
SWITCH
RELEASE DATE
07.29.22

nations—special soldiers who mourn the dead by playing music on their ritual flutes. Together, they learn that Keves and Agnus have a secret common enemy that threatens Aionios, and decide to join forces to save the world, even as their own armies pursue them.



The story in *Xenoblade Chronicles 3* looks like it will continue the multiversal saga of the first two games. However, executive director Tetsuya Takahashi promised that



■ *Xenoblade Chronicles 3*'s story and characters—like Ethel here—blur the line between good and evil.





KLAUS AND THE CONDUIT

Though executive director Tetsuya Takahashi might believe that players can simply jump into *Xenoblade Chronicles 3* without playing the previous two games, you might not get everything that's going on.

While the previous two games do have standalone stories, they're also connected by complex lore of parallel universes and scientific hubris. Spoilers ahead!

The entire *Xenoblade* universe was created by a scientist named Klaus, who created parallel universes by activating a mysterious artifact known as the Conduit. In the world of the original *Xenoblade Chronicles*, Klaus shows up as Zanza, the soul of the Bionis, while in *Xenoblade Chronicles 2*, we see Klaus as a human scientist.

Given that the trailer for *Xenoblade Chronicles 3* showed imagery from both of the previous games in the series, we expect that Aionios is another world that the Conduit created. It could even be the world that ties all other worlds together.

"The game will be enjoyable for both those who've played *Xenoblade Chronicles* or *Xenoblade Chronicles 2*, as well as those who will be playing a *Xenoblade Chronicles* game for the first time."

TETSUYA TAKAHASHI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"the game will be enjoyable for both those who've played *Xenoblade Chronicles* or *Xenoblade Chronicles 2*, as well as those who will be playing a *Xenoblade Chronicles* game for the first time."

Even longtime fans of the series will find plenty of new gameplay mechanics and quality-of-life improve-

ments to discover in *Xenoblade Chronicles 3*. For example, parties will now include six playable characters, split into three different roles: attacker, defender, and healer. And target lines now indicate which character an enemy is attacking so that you can maneuver your characters on the battlefield accordingly.

The game lets you switch between characters on the fly, which is especially helpful in combat.





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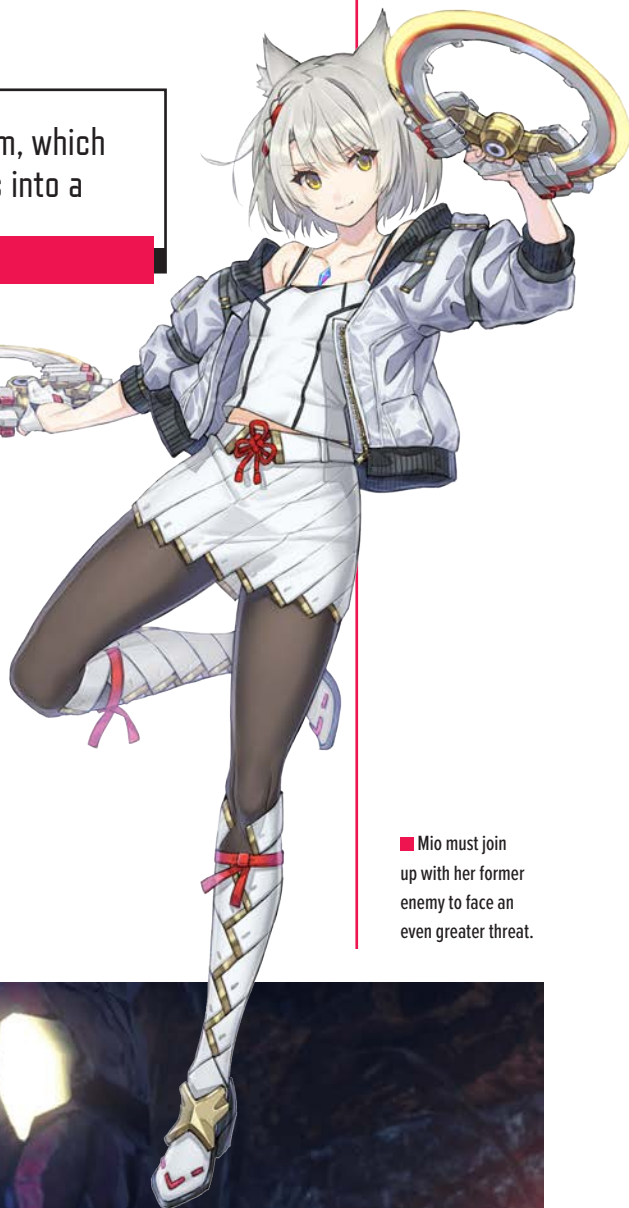
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One of the coolest new mechanics is the interlink system, which pairs off characters and lets them combine their powers into a powerful “Duroboros” form.

Coordinating your team in combat is made even easier by the fact that *Xenoblade Chronicles 3* lets you switch which character you’re controlling on the fly, whether exploring or in the middle of battle. A new quick dash move will also let Attack-

ers attack foes from behind to maximize damage.

One of the coolest new mechanics is the interlink system, which pairs off characters and lets them combine their powers



■ Mio must join up with her former enemy to face an even greater threat.





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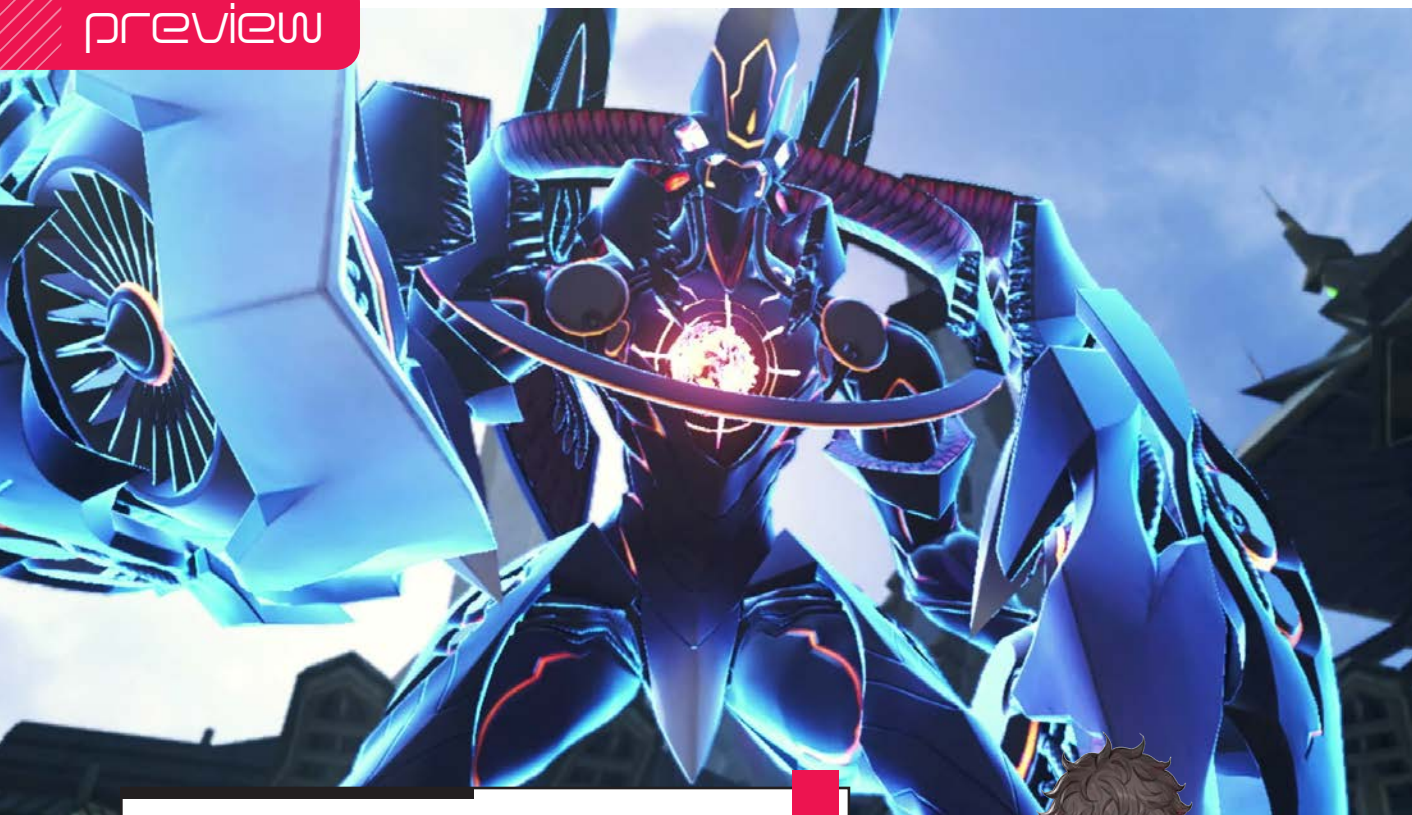
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*Content will release in 6 waves of 8 courses from March 18, 2022 until the end of 2023.


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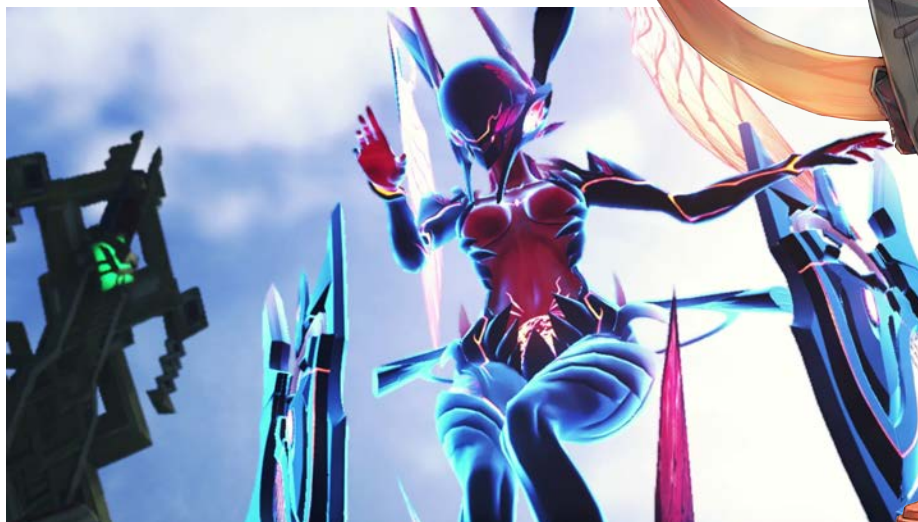
But not everything is changing in *Xenoblade Chronicles 3*. Along with Takahashi, a lot of the series' core creative team is returning.

into a powerful "Ouroboros" form. Each Ouroboros has its own move-set which can devastate stronger enemies.

But not everything is changing in *Xenoblade Chronicles 3*. Along with Takahashi, a lot of the series' core creative team is returning. That

includes *Xenoblade Chronicles 2* character designer Masatsugu Saito, artist Koichi Mugitani, and composers Yasunori Mitsuda, Manami Kiyota, ACE, Kenji Hiramatsu, and Mariam Abounnasr. 

■ Party member Taion fights with weapons known as "Katashiro" that look as though they're made of paper.



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DIGIMON SURVIVE



SURVIVAL OF THE BIT-EST

BY JOSH HARMON

Even if you think *Digimon* started out as an attempt to replicate the success of that other megapopular “mon” franchise—and we’re not saying it did; please don’t fight us, Digifans—Bandai Namco’s menagerie of digital monsters has clearly staked out its own distinctive identity over the past 25 years, especially in the world of gaming.

The latest evidence of that inventiveness is *Digimon Survive*, a long-awaited title that mixes inviting

visuals with an interesting blend of genres. Part adventure game, part visual novel, and part tactical RPG, *Survive* follows a group of school kids, led by Takuma Momozuka, on a trip to a local temple to learn more about ancient legends. Soon, they find themselves transported to another world, one filled with—you guessed it—Digimon.

Each of the main kids soon partners up with a ‘mon (one that conveniently matches their personality and style, of course). It’s these

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
BANDAI NAMCO
DEVELOPER
HYDE
PLATFORMS
SWITCH, XBOX ONE,
PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE
07.29.2022



Though the game will have plenty of the 2D character art and text-heavy conversations you'd expect from a visual novel, it does push beyond the standard tropes.



relationships, between the kids and their Digimon and between one another, that will be crucial to the game's story of survival.

The bulk of *Digimon Survive*, roughly 70%, will be focused on narrative segments and adventure-game-style exploration. Though the game will have plenty of the 2D character art and text-heavy conversations you'd expect from a visual novel, it does push beyond the standard tropes. You'll be able to travel to different locations from a world map and explore environments for clues, sometimes using your smartphone



(NOT ENTIRELY) DIGITAL MONSTERS

If you're only loosely familiar with *Digimon*, you might think of them as creatures that live inside computer networks—the so-called “Digital World.” And that might have been accurate in the earliest days of the franchise, when Digimon were a series of digital pets akin to Tamagotchi.

But *Digimon Survive* actually reflects a slightly different and more modern understanding of Digimon lore, one espoused by Hiroyuki Kakudo, the director of the original *Digimon Adventure* anime series. Neither Digimon nor the Digital World were created by humanity's invention of computers. Instead, technology just allowed us to access this parallel realm that had always existed alongside our own. In previous eras, people may have made contact with Digimon through magic. That factors into this game's premise, with our heroes investigating ancient legends that (obviously) predate computers.

Though we don't know exactly how this different approach will play out in *Digimon Survive*, we do know it impacted the monsters the developers chose to include in the game. The 113 Digimon available to fight and train emphasize designs that look more natural or animalistic, rather than those that look overly technological.



to scan the artfully rendered 3D backgrounds.

Of course, you might also find yourself roped into the game's tactical battles. While the broad strokes of combat will be familiar to anyone who's played a strategy RPG—you move your units around a grid and issue commands to fight enemies, in this case unfriendly wild Digimon—there are a few quirks that should make *Survive* stand out.

For starters, your relationships

with other characters may impact the flow of a battle. If your past decisions have won over one of the other kids in your group, they might come to your rescue during a fight. In a twist similar to some of Atlus's *Shin Megami Tensei* games, you also have the option of conversing with the wild Digimon you encounter in battle. Make the right choices, and you can persuade them to give you helpful items or join your team as a partner.

In the final big twist to combat,

■ Saki Kimishima is an outspoken and optimistic member of the group who partners up with Floramon.

While the broad strokes of combat will be familiar to anyone who's played a strategy RPG, there are a few quirks that should make *Survive* stand out.

A promotional image for Xbox All Access featuring Halo Infinite. It shows a Spartan in green armor with a gold visor in the upper right, and another Spartan in the lower left firing a red energy weapon. The background is a mix of a snowy mountain landscape and a dark, industrial interior. A large, stylized 'X' is overlaid on the image.

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■ Takuma will need to build a strong relationship with Agumon if he wants to get him and his friends back to their world.

you'll also be able to evolve—or Digivolve—the monsters in your squad during a fight, allowing them to take on a more powerful form. Doing so will require you to spend some of your limited supply of SP, however, and you'll continue to burn SP for as long as your Digimon stays in an evolved state. You'll have to learn to manage your SP carefully to succeed.

Bandai Namco expects a playthrough of *Digimon Survive* to clock in at around 40 hours—and that's just to unlock one of the three possible endings. As a way to celebrate the series' 25th anniversary, the game looks to be a substantial and substantially fresh take on the creatures and world of *Digimon*. ©

Bandai Namco expects a playthrough of *Digimon Survive* to clock in at around 40 hours—and that's just to unlock one of the three possible endings.





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LIVE **A** LIVE

A LONG-LOST RPG GETS TO LIVE AGAIN

BY MOLLIE L PATTERSON

Back in the days of the 8- and 16-bit consoles, it was the norm that many Japanese role-playing games would never make it to Western shores. Too often, publishers saw RPGs as incompatible with Western tastes, and it wasn't until *Final Fantasy VII* became a gigantic worldwide hit on the original PlayStation that they saw the potential for RPGs outside of Japan.

One '90s RPG Western gamers have long wished to see officially

translated is *Live A Live*. Directed by Takashi Tokita, who had previously worked as a designer on *Final Fantasy IV*, the 1994 Super Famicom (SNES) RPG was notable for its ambitious storytelling. Rather than focusing on just one character or team adventuring through one particular world, the game instead weaves together seven unique stories of different protagonists who live in separate time periods: Prehistory, Imperial China, The Wild West, Twilight of Edo

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
NINTENDO
DEVELOPER
SQUARE ENIX
PLATFORMS
SWITCH
RELEASE DATE
07.22.2022

Rather than focusing on just one character or team adventuring through one particular world, the game instead weaves together seven unique stories of different protagonists.





■ Square Enix's HD-2D initiative has resulted in a beautiful mix of old-school and new-generation visuals.

SQUARE TIME LOOPS

It's a bit humorous that it was *Final Fantasy VII* that helped change perceptions of Japanese RPGs in the West, when it was the offerings from Squaresoft (back before its merger with Enix) that so often remained stuck in Japan back in the '90s. That was especially true for Squaresoft's efforts on Nintendo's 16-bit Super Famicom, but thankfully, the company has been putting some genuine work into bringing many of those games back in recent years.

One of the highest-profile, criminally untranslated RPGs for years was 1995's *Seiken Densetsu 3*, but the game finally made its way to us 25 years later as *Trials of Mana*. In 2019, at long last, *Romancing SaGa 3* finally got an English-language remaster on numerous platforms. And, while it did see a single port on Nintendo DS in 2007, Squaresoft's mecha-themed strategy RPG *Front Mission* is getting a full-service remake later this year on Nintendo Switch.

Sadly, some of Squaresoft's Super Famicom titles still remain exclusive to Japan even now, such as *Bahamut Lagoon* and *Front Mission Series: Gun Hazard*. Hopefully in a future issue of *Walmart Gamecenter* we can tell you that they're on their way to America as well.

While Square Enix is keeping those original stories and cast members intact, the overall game itself is getting some serious upgrades for the benefit of more modern audiences.



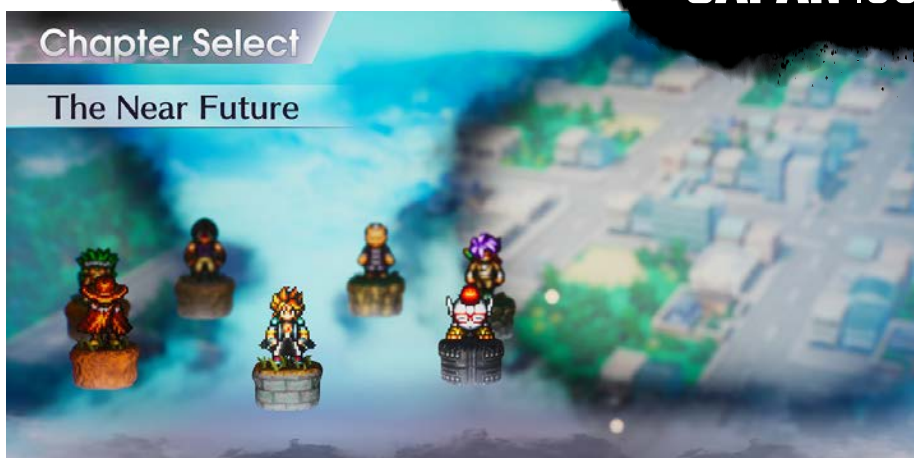
Japan, Present Day, The Near Future, and The Distant Future.

Across those tales, the player meets a vast array of heroes, all of whom lead very different lives while having some sort of destiny to fulfill. Of course, it wouldn't be a spoiler to tell you that part of their destinies is

to come together at some point—but how that happens, and where their lives then lead, is a secret best left to you to discover.


While Square Enix is keeping those original stories and cast members intact, the overall game itself is getting some serious upgrades for the benefit of more modern audiences. *Live A Live* is the latest example of the company's HD-2D efforts, a method of combining retro-styled character sprites with higher-resolution, polygon-based backgrounds. The idea debuted in 2018's *Octopath Traveler*, and from





■ Seven heroes.
Seven time periods.
Countless adventures
that await.

what we've seen so far, the team is continuing to refine and enhance the concept here in *Live A Live*. While it's hard not to appreciate the finer touches of the modernization efforts, this top-down visual reworking feels so natural that your mind could be tricked into thinking that *Live A Live* actually did look this impressive when it first launched all those years ago.

Despite plenty of older games remaining stuck in Japan, untranslated and unreleased in the West, it's nice to see Square Enix putting so much effort into giving its older games another chance (see sidebar "Square Time Loops"). While we might never have expected a game like *Live A Live* to finally get an English release, this is one case where we're happy to be wrong. 



The background of the entire page is a detailed anime-style illustration. It features a central male character with dark hair and a green jacket, looking down. To his left is a pink-haired girl with a small white dog. To his right is a blonde man in a blue suit. Above them are a woman with long white hair in a black uniform and a woman with brown hair in a white dress. In the bottom right, a man in a tan hat and a woman in a pink dress are visible. The scene is set in a vibrant, neon-lit environment.

preview

YURUKILL: THE CALUMNIATION GAMES

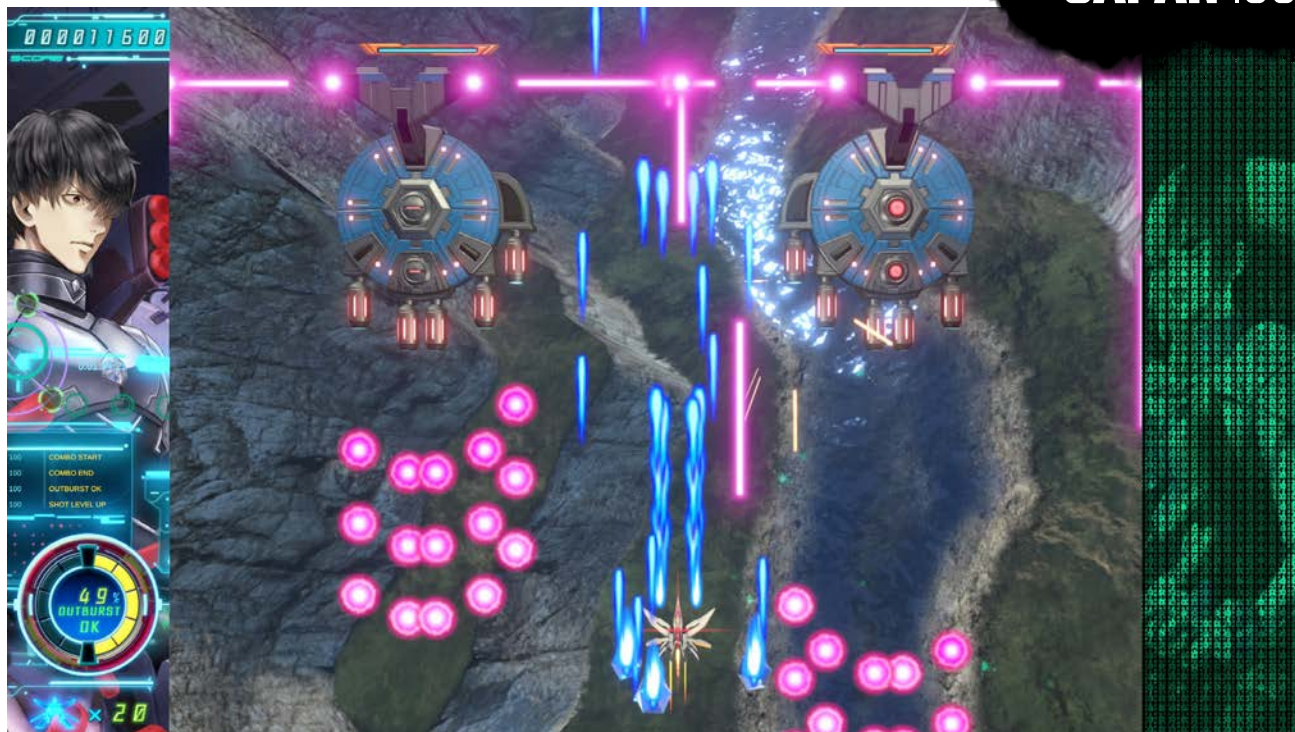
TALK AND SHOOT YOUR WAY TO EXONERATION

BY MOLLIE L PATTERSON

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FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
NIS AMERICA
DEVELOPER
G.REV, IZANAGIGAMES
PLATFORMS
PS5, SWITCH, PS4
RELEASE DATE
07.05.2022



While game creators around the globe help make our hobby as rich and diverse as it is today, some types of gaming experiences are still often dominated by Japanese developers. For one example, Taito's groundbreaking arcade game *Space*

■ Sometimes, to prove you didn't shoot someone, you have to shoot things.

Invaders helped give birth to shoot 'em ups over 40 years ago—and recent releases from *Cotton Fantasy* to *DoDonPachi Resurrection* keep the genre alive and thriving to this day. For another, more modern example, visual novels such as the *Steins;Gate* series take story and character tropes

popularized in Japanese anime and manga, and give them a more interactive flair.

While the two genres couldn't be farther apart gameplay-wise, finding a way to bring them together was the idea behind *Yurukill: The Calumniation Games*.





SHOOTER REVOLUTIONARIES

While G.revolution, or G.rev for short, might not be a name you're instantly familiar with, the Japanese developer was a perfect fit for overseeing the shoot 'em up segments of *Yurukill*, as it has a long history with the genre.

G.rev began life thanks to former employees of Taito, who had worked on legendary arcade releases such as *G-Darius* and *RayStorm*. Early in the team's life, it did contract work with other developers to help fund future projects. One of those devs was a well-known studio in the Japanese hardcore gaming market, Treasure, and the teams combined forces on two beloved shoot 'em ups, *Ikaruga* and *Gradius V*.

From there, G.rev made a name for itself on Sega's final home console, the Dreamcast, and its arcade board counterpart, the Naomi. During that era, the studio produced titles such as *Border Down*, *Under Defeat*, *Mamorukun Curse!*, and *Senko no Ronde*.

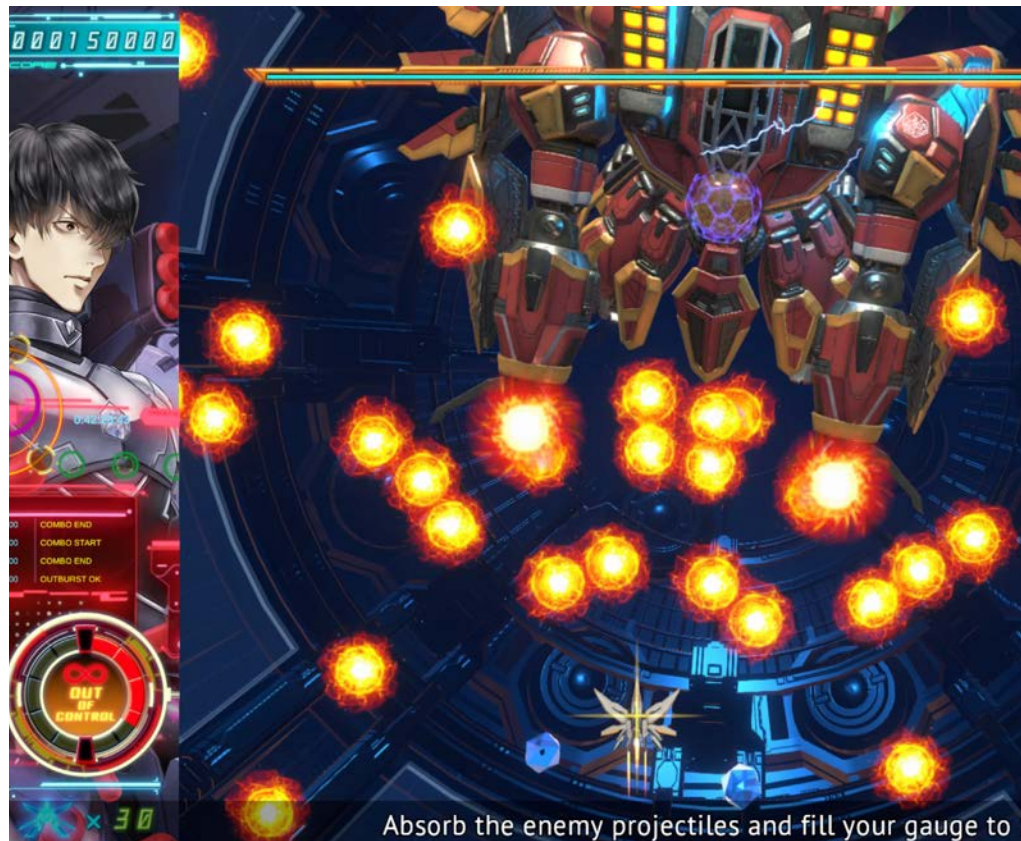
In more recent years, G.rev has continued to craft shoot 'em ups such as *Kokuga* and *Strania*, and even returned to help out an old friend by working together with Taito on *Dariusburst Chronicle Saviours*, the newest chapter of the *Darius* franchise.

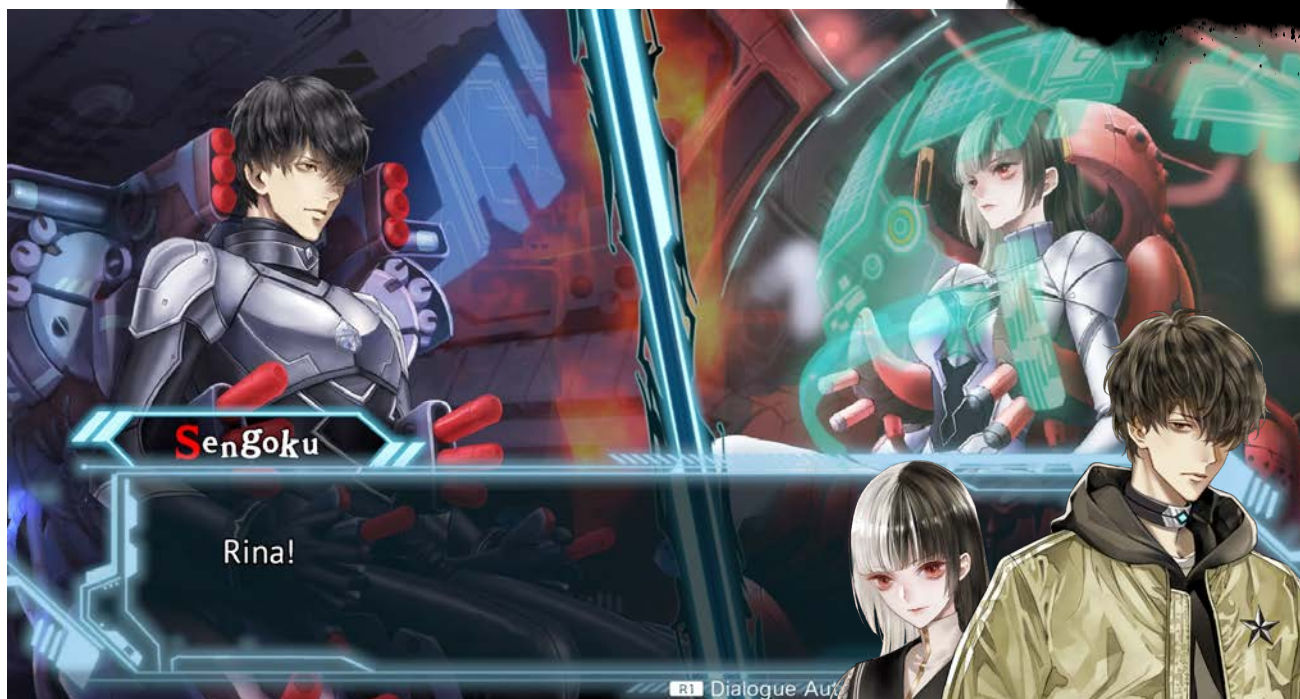


On the story side, we're introduced to Sengoku Shunju, a young man accused of a crime he didn't commit. He wakes up in a strange location called Yurukill Land that's part courthouse and part amusement park, run by a mysterious woman named Binko. Binko informs the prisoner that, to receive a pardon and secure his freedom, he must survive the park's various attractions.

To do so, Sengoku (and the player) will have to converse with other characters, solve puzzles, and try to figure out the truth behind Binko and her sadistic playground. However, *Yurukill*'s twist is that it also incorporates a number of top-down shooter segments. These stages both provide more action-oriented gameplay to contrast the game's text-heavy visual novel side, and also serve as

■ The better you pay attention during the game's story portions, the more chances you'll have for its action stages.






a unique way to delve deeper into the story.

For each of the shoot 'em up stages, Sengoku must team up with one of his fellow accused to take on the Executioners, bosses that each

hold a deeply emotional grudge against a particular Prisoner. Before blasting off, the duo participate in a high-speed quiz, in which every right answer means another extra life. The stages are themed around the current narrative beats of the story, with enemies, projectiles, and other elements referencing that Prisoner's supposed crime. To avoid meeting an early death, the Prisoners must reach the stage's Executioner and then wear down their defenses enough to open them up to listening to reason.

With shoot 'em up segments crafted by well-known genre contributor G.rev (see sidebar "Shooter Revolutionaries") and a story penned by Homura Kawamoto (*Kakegurui*), *Yurukill: The Calumniation Games* seems poised to bring together two genres well trod by Japanese game developers in an experience that's anything but the norm. 

The stages are themed around the current narrative beats of the story, with enemies, projectiles, and other elements referencing that Prisoner's supposed crime.



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FIRE EMBLEM WARRIORS: THREE HOPE

THREE NATIONS, ONE NEW HOPE

BY MOLLIE L PATTERSON

In the original *Fire Emblem Warriors*, Nintendo, Intelligent Systems, Omega Force, and Team Ninja joined together to craft an epic hack-and-slash adventure that infused Koei Tecmo's long-running *Warriors* series with heroes and villains from the world of *Fire Emblem*.

Now, in that game's follow-up, the conflict is expanding, but the storyline is focusing even tighter. *Fire Emblem Warriors: Three Hopes* will still offer fast-action battles

against hundreds of enemies at a time, but now, those battles will center specifically around the characters and settings of *Fire Emblem: Three Houses*. However, instead of playing as that game's protagonist Byleth, you'll step into the shoes of new hero Shez.

Guided by a mysterious being named Arval, Shez (and you, the player) will need to decide if he (or she)

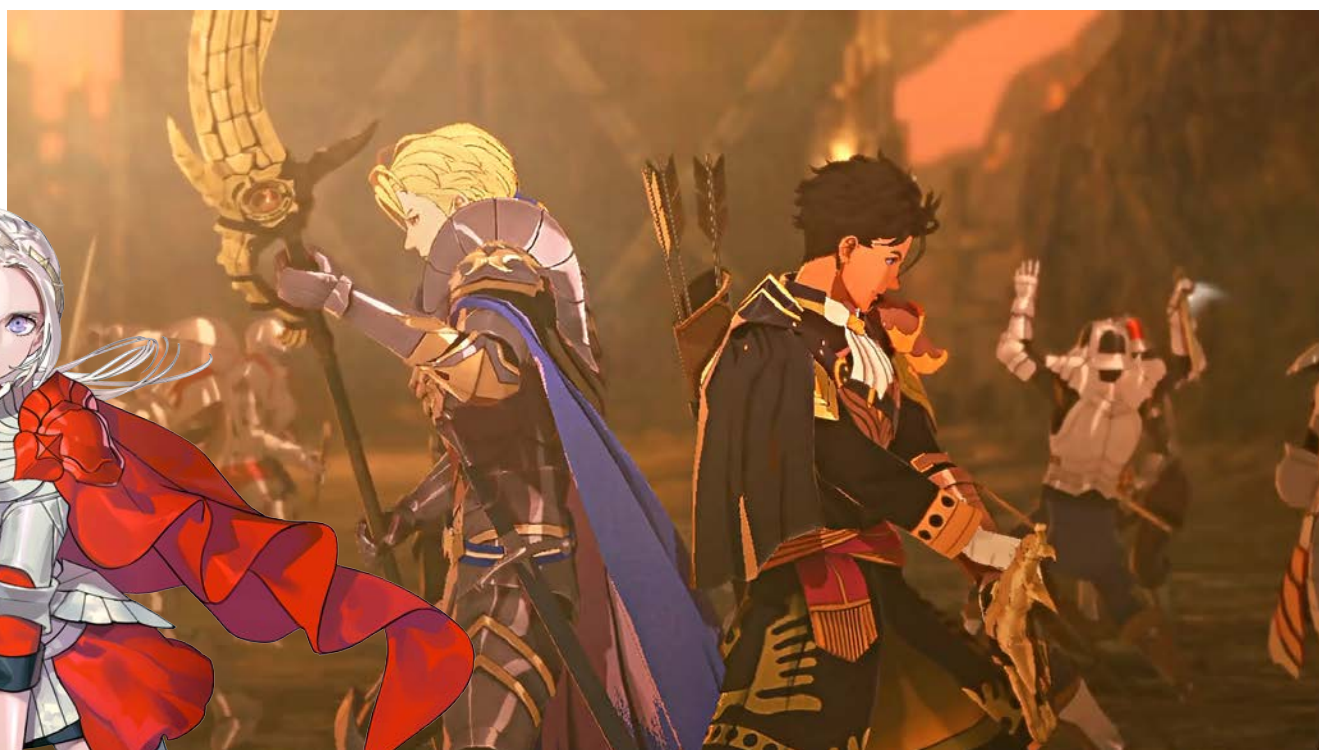


FACT FILE


PUBLISHER
NINTENDO
DEVELOPER
INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS,
OMEGA FORCE, TEAM
NINJA
PLATFORMS
SWITCH
RELEASE DATE
06.24.2022

wants to fight for the future of Fódlan alongside Edelgard and the Adrestian Empire, Dimitri and the Holy Kingdom of Faerghus, or Claude and the Leicester Alliance. Each house will feature its own storyline, ending, and appropriate set of familiar faces recruitable as playable fighters against the enemy hordes.

No matter which you choose, victory on *Fire Emblem Warriors: Three Hopes*' battlefields will require quick reflexes and smart strategies. Of course, winning this war will require more than just sword and shield.

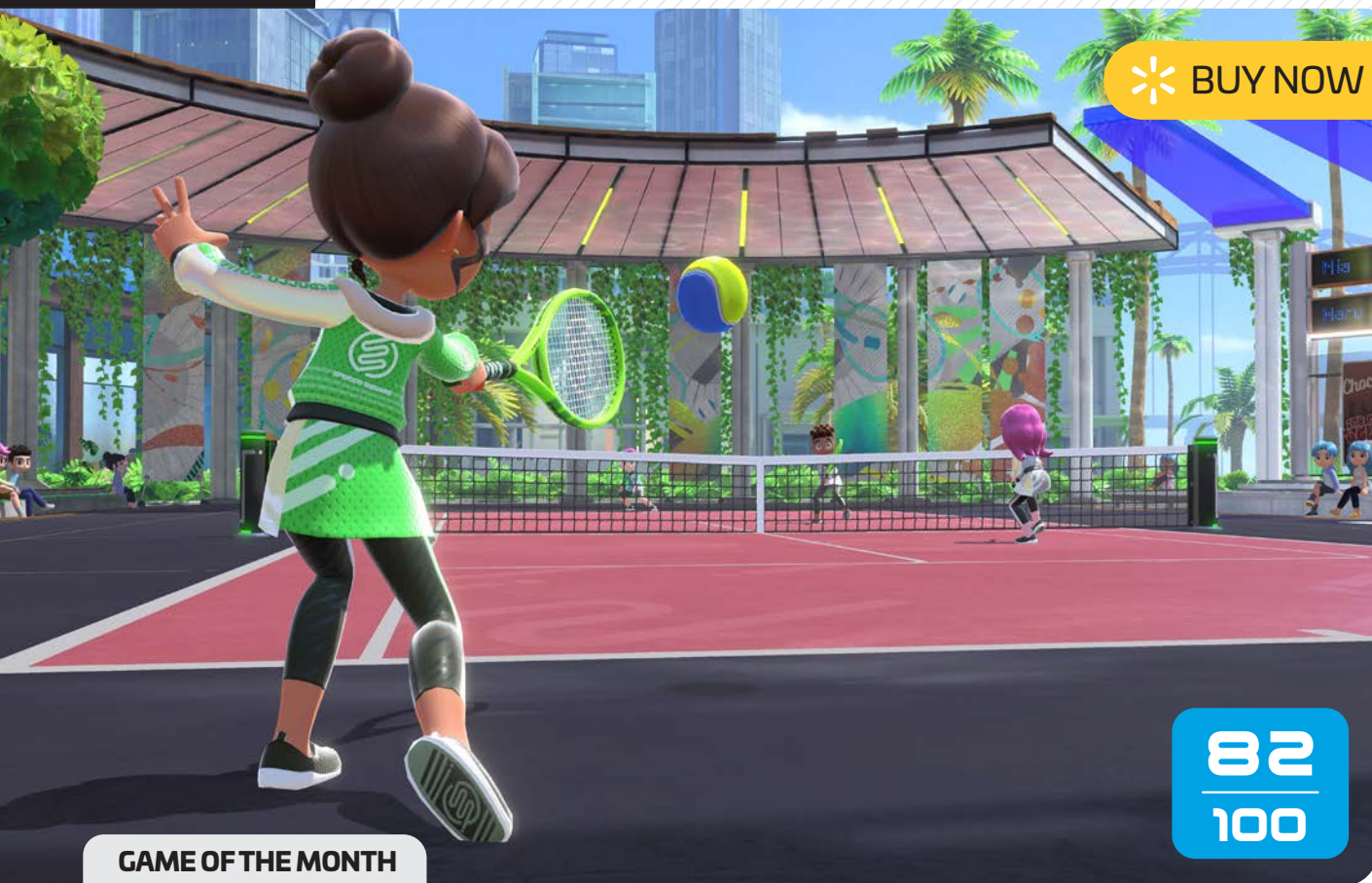


Between battles, you'll need to plan proper tactics on the War Map, and closer to home, strengthening your relationships with your teammates will also strengthen your bonds in battle.

Fire Emblem Warriors: Three Hopes looks to recreate a lot of the elements that fans love about its strategy RPG older sibling—just with a whole lot more button mashing. 

■ Two heroes versus hundreds of foes? Finally, a fair fight.

No matter which you choose, victory on *Fire Emblem Warriors: Three Hopes*' battlefields will require quick reflexes and smart strategies.


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GAME OF THE MONTH

NINTENDO SWITCH SPORTS

WII-INCARNATION

BY JOSH HARMON

Nintendo *Switch Sports* is the latest successor to *Wii Sports*, the best-selling console exclusive of all time. Okay, so maybe the original game only notched that record thanks to a bit of a loophole: It was a pack-in title, included free with nearly every Wii that Nintendo sold. But there's

no question that the existence of *Wii Sports* helped Nintendo move so many units of its first motion-controlled console. Its simple pick-up-and-play approach to a variety of virtual sports allowed just about anyone to have fun immediately. For a while, there was even a rash of local news stories about grandmas

in nursing homes finding their inner gamer by playing *Wii Sports*.

The best thing about *Nintendo Switch Sports* is that it retains much of that first game's simplicity. Across its six included sports—bowling, tennis, badminton, soccer, volleyball, and chambara (nonlethal sword fighting)—all but one will be instantly accessible to even the least experienced gamers.

In tennis, for instance, all you need to worry about is swinging a Joy-Con controller at the right time, and adding spin to the ball by twisting your wrist. Your onscreen avatars—you can play doubles with a friend, or control two players at once—run and dive toward the ball automatically. So easy, you don't even need a tutorial!

Other sports add in a few more gestures to learn or buttons to use,

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER

NINTENDO

DEVELOPER

NINTENDO

PLATFORMS

SWITCH

RELEASE DATE

04.29.2022





but they still keep things relatively simple. The only truly complicated sport in the bunch

is soccer, which makes

you move your character with the analog stick, sprint by holding the left Joy-Con's trigger, pass by holding the other trigger, and kick and dive into headers with motion controls, all in real time alongside other players. It's still pretty basic compared to, say, *Rocket League*, but it's a step beyond the rest of the sports.

While you'll no doubt have your favorite sport among the bunch,

they're all good representations of their real-world inspirations, and they're all decent fun. It's refreshingly seamless to get into a match, whether you're playing online against other players, competing locally on one console, or practicing against the AI.

And if you're exhausted by online games that try too hard to get you hooked and make you treat them like full-time jobs, *Nintendo Switch Sports* is a refreshing corrective. There aren't any challenges to complete or levels to grind. The only nod in the direction of games-as-a-service is a simple unlock system for cosmetics, with new items for your avatar added every week. Even here, it doesn't take too much time to nab everything, and you have multiple weeks to complete a new set before it's gone forever.

Sure, *Nintendo Switch Sports* might not be the most cutting-edge game around, but it's simple, wholesome, quality fun for everyone. That can be hard to find in gaming these days. And with Nintendo having already announced plans for future updates—including a whole new sport, golf—it's only going to get better from here. [G](#)

Nintendo Switch Sports might not be the most cutting-edge game around, but it's simple, wholesome, quality fun for everyone.





1 ON 1

KENJI KIMURA

GAME DIRECTOR, GHOSTWIRE: TOKYO
DIRECTOR, TANGO GAMEWORKS

While Shinji Mikami's Tango Gameworks has built its name around the survival horror series *The Evil Within*, the Tokyo team set its sights on a very different style of spooky adventure in *Ghostwire: Tokyo*. The third-person perspective made way for a more first-person shooter-like experience. Brutal combat against monsters got swapped for more mystical battles against evil spirits. And *The Evil Within*'s fantastical horror settings got traded in for a far more realistic recreation of the team's hometown. To learn more about Tango Gameworks' daring new romp, we ran around Shibuya cleansing *torii* gates until we tracked down the game's director, Kenji Kimura.

WGC: *Ghostwire: Tokyo* feels very different from Tango Gameworks' earlier titles. Why did the team want to try making a game like this?

Kenji Kimura: We wanted to make a game that is packed with all the fun and appeal of an authentic yet paranormal Tokyo, where you can feel the unordinary within the ordinary. The idea was to make the player feel immersed in [that] Tokyo, a reimagining of the city that you can visit in a casual way, with some battles and a lot of exploration.

WGC: *Ghostwire: Tokyo* has a unique combat style that's sort of a mix between martial arts and magic. What was the inspiration behind that combat?

KK: The mysterious paranormal entities that are attacking Tokyo aren't "physical" beings, so it didn't feel intuitive to fight them using knives and bullets. It made more sense to look for inspiration from

Japanese history and culture, where people were depicted as fighting against evil spirits using natural elements in things like *onmyodo* and *ninjutsu*, which were things that we were exposed to in various forms of entertainment while growing up. And we didn't want to just trace *onmyodo* and *ninjutsu*, we wanted to make an updated version of those moves.

WGC: Who are the Visitors, and what kind of threat do they pose to both main character Akito and the city of Tokyo?

KK: Visitors are just like the name suggests. They are entities that come from another world. As evil spirits, negative emotions are at the center of their exis-

GAME HIGHLIGHTS

METAL GEAR SOLID 4, METAL GEAR ONLINE 2,
METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

tence. They are manifested from strong feelings felt in life, like the stress, anxiousness, and nervousness when entering a new school, being hired to work in a new company, or getting married. When we researched [Japanese ghost stories], folklore, and urban legends, we found that they allow for different interpretations to exist, [and] a similar approach was taken with the designs of the Visitors. For example, the umbrella-holding salarymen can look like people in formal suits on the way to or returning from a funeral. It's all about creating a mystique that can be different from person to person.

WGC: What did it mean for the team to be able to focus on making *Ghostwire: Tokyo* for the PlayStation 5 without having to also make it for last-gen consoles?

KK: The city of Tokyo has so many different things, objects, geometry, etc. in it. Focusing on PlayStation 5 allowed us to really tune the memory management and optimizations for next-gen. As a result, we were able to make a highly detailed, vertical and horizontal Tokyo that can be traversed seamlessly. The DualSense controls also were very important. They make you feel like you are tugging on a wire, yanking out and crushing the cores, while controlling the hand movement.

WGC: In the game, dogs run around begging for food, while cats run shops and scavenger hunts. Does this prove, once and for all, that cats are better than dogs?

KK: That's interesting, because in other interviews, we were asked the opposite. We on the team own dogs and cats, so we discussed a lot regarding how they would act in the game. Doggies might tend to approach you for hugs and kitties may tend to maintain some distance and expect you to come near them for hugs, but they all deserve your love and attention. 🐾

We wanted to make a game that is packed with all the fun and appeal of an authentic yet paranormal Tokyo, where you can feel the unordinary within the ordinary.

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